

## ***Jelly's Hero***

It was May and we were docked at the Charleston Maritime Center. Jelly, our year old sea cat, had the run of the place. Everyone knew her and she roamed at liberty along the wharf, jumping on this boat or that one for a visit, a nap or a snack.

A large, seagoing freight schooner, *Aventuur*, had just tied up at the end of the dock the day before and we had made the acquaintance of the three-man crew, offering them a beer and a chat. They had just sailed from Surinam with a hold full of angelique wood that was destined to be used for the keel of a new tallship, "Spirit of Carolina". The Canadian crew was full of adventurous talk of the high seas, exotic places and their homes and we were all ears. Jelly rubbed against our feet and listened intently.

We headed off to the library the next day and upon our return, Andy, mate on the *Aventuur*, told us Jelly had been chased off the wharf by a couple of dogs and had nearly drowned. He plucked her out at the last minute, but she had gotten away and run back to our boat before he could determine if she was okay. We clambered aboard to find a wet, bedraggled cat lying in the middle of our bed. She was a pitiful sight. Her gray and white fur was all matted down with dirty salt water, making her look tiny and helpless. Our usually quiet cat was all chatter, meowing on and on about her terrible misadventure with the vicious hounds, her flow interrupted only with heaves of salt water. We bathed and comforted her like a sick child and she recovered without any emotional or physical trauma that we could assess. *Aventuur* left early the next morning before we could say goodbye or properly thank Andy.

We, too, left Charleston within a few days heading North to New England for the summer with no definite plans for ports of call in mind. Once we docked in Mystic, Connecticut, we dug out the charts to determine exactly where we'd go next. Farther North and farther East sounded good. We had visited Maine the summer before and loved it and so we thought we'd venture beyond Mt. Desert Island this summer and really experience Downeast Maine. Perhaps, even Canada... Nova Scotia and where was *Aventuur* from? New Brunswick...how far was that?

Three weeks later we edged our way across the Bay of Fundy and picked up a mooring off the docks at St. Andrews-by-the-Sea, New Brunswick. The dockmaster, Beebe, met us and gave us a hearty welcome.

"Are you familiar with the schooner, *Aventuur*?" we asked.

"Sure...they're out now; be here in a few weeks, I'd guess".

We were disappointed. We'd come with a thought way in the back of our minds that maybe we'd run into Andy, but we knew it would be a long shot. We didn't even know his last name.

Off we went into town, anxious to explore and scope out our new surroundings and catch up on the unpleasant aspects of cruising like doing mounds of dirty laundry. The local laundromat was next to the internet café and we headed there first. As I was pulling wet clothes out of the washer, a dark bearded young man caught my eye. I had only known Andy for two days and chatted with him rather briefly, but could it be?

"Are you Andy?" I ventured warily.

"Yes", he hesitated, then added "and you look vaguely familiar."

"I'm Marcie from the *Nine of Cups*. We met in Charleston. You saved my ...".

"Cat", he completed my sentence with surprise showing on his face.

"Yes...Jelly is her name. We never thanked you properly. Come meet my husband, David, he's next door and we'll go for a beer."

"No, I can't. I'm doing laundry and need to get back to work. I'm working at a pizza parlor for the summer."

An older man who had been eavesdropping on our rather loud conversation, interjected.  
“When a pretty lady asks you to go for a beer...never say no!”

We all laughed and Andy came with me to find David. David looked at me expectantly with an eye on the young man I had in tow.

“THIS is Andy!” I crowed triumphantly.

We talked for a few minutes, but he was adamant we couldn’t buy him a beer or lunch. He had to get back to work. I hugged him goodbye, but as I watched him walk away, I felt a tinge of remorse that we still hadn’t suitably thanked him for his act of heroism. How do you thank a 23 year old that doesn’t want to be thanked? We decided to buy him a 6-pack of Molson and drop it off at his workplace with a note from Jelly.

Thank you note and brown paper bag with beer in hand, we found the pizza joint and asked if Andy was there. The young girl at the counter eyed us suspiciously, “Yes, he’s in the kitchen. Who can I tell him wants to see him?”

“We’re David & Marcie...we met Andy in Charleston and ...”, I had intended to blurt out the whole story, but she cut me short.

“Oh, you’re the people. He saved your cat!” she was glowing with pride. “Let me get him.”

“Andy, the cat people are here”, she hollered back to the kitchen.

Out walked Andy, outfitted in cut-off shorts, t-shirt and pizza-stained apron.

“Hey, you guys. What are you doing here?”

“These are the cat people I told you about,” he added as an aside to the assembled group of coworkers.

“Jelly really wanted to say thanks and since we couldn’t take you out for a beer, we thought we’d bring one to you.”

His face reddened, but he gratefully took the beer and note. “Thanks to Jelly, too! See you again sometime.”

The world’s a big place, but you can always find a hero if you’re looking.